

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Provider Relief Fund Improvement Act of 2021 (H.R. 5963)

*Introduced by Reps. Abigail Spanberger (D-VA), Anthony Gonzalez (R-OH), Cindy Axne (D-IA),
and Mariannette Miller-Meeks (R-IA)*

Endorsed by: The American Hospital Association, the National Rural Health Association, Argentum, America's Essential Hospitals, Medical Group Management Association

Twenty months after COVID-19 was first detected in the U.S., more than 47 million Americans have been infected and more than 750,000 have died. The sheer scope of this crisis has placed unprecedented strain on the health care providers on the front lines of our nation's response.

Congress recognized the challenge the pandemic posed to community health care providers when it created the CARES Act Provider Relief Fund in April 2020. Since then, Congress has appropriated \$178 billion to be allocated to all providers and an additional \$8.5 billion to be allocated to rural providers through the Fund.

Unfortunately, constantly changing guidance, difficulties in reconciling tax information, shifting deadlines, and other technical problems have plagued the program and slowed the disbursement of funds. Since the program's creation, only \$135 billion of the \$178 billion Congress appropriated has been released. To date, there have been no distributions from the fund in 2021 and no funding has been released to compensate providers for expenses associated with the Delta Variant surge over the summer.

Meanwhile, hospitals and providers across the country report serious staffing and infrastructure issues related to the surge in cases caused by the Delta variant over the summer. These staffing challenges have been exacerbated by threats of violence against hospitals and their staffers.

The Provider Relief Fund Improvement Act (H.R. 5963) recognizes the urgent need for additional support to front line providers and would provide certainty about the future of federal relief by:

- Requiring the HHS Secretary to distribute the remaining Provider Relief Fund by March 31, 2022;
- Extending the deadline for providers to use their Provider Relief Fund awards through the later of June 30, 2022 or the end of the COVID-19 public health emergency;
- Refunding providers who had to return relief money at the June 30th, 2021 deadline; and
- Expanding the eligible uses Provider Relief Fund award to include investments in workplace safety, such as workplace violence prevention trainings and trauma support for affected workers.